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Tolstoy and the Serving Mentality & Moral Imperative

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Introduction

Count Leo Tolstoy, when setting out to write works both long and short during his career of over 60 years, no doubt took a great deal of consideration in the moral development of the characters he created and the narratives he crafted. Within his stories, characters are strong willed, or at least develop to that state throughout the narrative, and are confronted by a significant conflicting force to their personal determinism. This force is often relayed through societal shifts, in times of war and strife, while other times it comes across as an inner struggle, something that is made crystal clear as a bout that begins as a psychological episode, but transcends into a struggle existential in its scope. Through his characters' struggles, Tolstoy places an additional focus on the moral imperatives of these individuals.

The moral imperative, as first enumerated by Immanuel Kant, is an individual's principle that compels them to act. Overall, Tolstoy adheres to this notion when crafting characters and particularly protagonists. Moreover, the moral imperatives that are expressed by his characters concern a personal dissociation with the self, followed by an eventual catharsis. The latter may be fleeting, sometimes ending in death, sometimes in renewed life, yet all the protagonists within the tales that will be analyzed follow along this path—they are, in the end, rewarded for their actions. Tolstoy is also somewhat split with how he writes the protagonists' backgrounds and underlying motivations.

About half are extremely self-serving, living to achieve an end that is entirely out of their reach. Along with the self-centered behavior comes an annihilation of their surroundings, wherein they become isolated from the outside world and dissociated from their potential as human beings. These protagonists' imperatives are governed by rationality and logic, yet because

they are followed to such a point, it cuts at their individuality and potential in life (see “Death of Ivan Ilyich” and “Father Sergius”). While these characters became aware of their shortcomings and obsessive focus, and reorient themselves on a path of greater open-mindedness or consideration for others, they are still left a shell by the times of their death. They are content with what has transpired, yet cannot fully redeem themselves. The sentiment bleeds over into consideration of what Tolstoy’s characters’ imperatives may to us 21st century readers about our own world—how it can enrich our own understanding of who we have been, who we are, and who we can become. Given the prevalence of a current globalized culture that seeks to cater to an individual’s every desire, these specific protagonists may serve as haunting omens. As shall be discussed in the “Father Sergius” analysis, Tolstoy grew dissatisfied with societal institutions that encouraged people to do (or do good) out of a need to better themselves, not others. This observation evident in his writing certainly informed his own worldview.

For the other set of protagonists, they are heavily concentrated on servantile work—focusing on others without much consideration for their own desires. As they are dedicated on this front, Tolstoy ultimately rewards them. These protagonists do not alter their imperative by the story’s close and appear to be little affected in terms of character development. Their lives utterly lack recognition, but this is the essential point that Tolstoy makes by including them, reaching to say to readers of all time that a life that proves truly worthy is ultimately not recognizable to the outside world, or at least lacking substantial recognition. It is easy to look at what Tolstoy is attempting and compare it to a karma system—those that are self-serving receiving bad karma and those who do “good unto others” receiving good karma.

This is not Tolstoy’s aim, for he also provides the “bad karma” characters with redemptive arcs—ones that have observable change, but not as wholly drastic a change as some

of the “good karma” characters. By doing this, Tolstoy is focused on a kind of proto-naturalism writing to character development (and potentially full naturalism as well, considering some of his stories were written during the 1890s and early 1900s, when the genre was thriving abroad) and societal reflection. Individuals in the real world simply represent one of the two imperatives that Tolstoy enumerates: self-serving or other-serving. Tolstoy considers both of these to emanate firstly from the mind. Simply working in an other-serving profession does not make an individual as such. The focus is entirely on the mental state and consideration. Should an individual remain other-serving to the core, then they are noted as such within his writing. Leading on from the two categories of individuals, Tolstoy offers a realistic interpretation of individual fate—when one is faced with dire circumstances, or repeated failures in certain endeavors, that individual is bound to adjust their life accordingly. This is usually seen foremost as the self-serving individuals moving closer to becoming other-serving.

Yet, as clearly evidenced within the stories to be analyzed, these characters simply cannot transition into an other-serving individual. As they become trapped in a halfway in between state, they are forever consigned to falling short of the potential shown by the characters that begin and end as other-serving. Tolstoy is always focused on making a point first and telling a story second. Given these angles on his stories, it is of further interest to consider what Tolstoy himself would have represented—self-serving or other-serving. It is clear from his endeavors later in life that on the surface of everything he was other-serving—building missions and programs around the world (institutions through which Mahatma Gandhi would get his start. However, we as the readers living one hundred years on from his death may never know what he was. I personally doubt that Tolstoy would openly refer to himself as other-serving, in fear that it may seem like posturing for attention. Considering this, should his potential humility serve to indicate that he

worked for others? Above all else, the true other-serving of Tolstoy may forever remain as such through his written words, which in the end are the core artifacts he leaves behind.

Effort has certainly been made to analyze the inner workings and character crafting of Tolstoy's two major novels *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*. The following thesis will analyze the presence of a moral imperative and a "self-serving" versus "other-serving" mentality at work in seven of Tolstoy's short stories: "Alyosha the Pot;" "The Diary of a Madman;" "The Prisoner of the Caucasus;" "Master and Man;" "The Devil;" "The Death of Ivan Ilyich;" and "Father Sergius." A points system is administered for all the principal characters, with the key following a positive to negative numerical scale. A graph of the results is demonstrated in the conclusion section. Leo Tolstoy indicates through the external success (or lack thereof) of his protagonists the necessity of living one's life not only with total commitment and purpose but entirely dedicated to serving others.

+2 Points	Entirely Other-Serving
+1 Point	Results of Catharsis, Peace, etc.
+1 Point	Mix of both with significant change towards an Other-Serving mentality by the conclusion of the narrative
-1 Point	Mix of both with nonsignificant change by the conclusion of the narrative
-2 Points	Entirely Self-Serving

Alyosha the Pot

Summary. Alyosha, a simple village boy, is sent to work as a yard porter for a merchant when he is nineteen. The work he does is rather mundane, yet Alyosha is both consistent and quick with the tasks given to him. He fancies the merchant's daughter but his father disapproves.

After tending to the roof of the merchant's house after a snow storm, he falls and is mortally wounded. Following a conversation with a priest at his bedside, Alyosha dies. The title of this story comes from the mention of Alyosha dropping a pot as a little child—the name stuck with teasing.

Analysis. The moral imperative of "Alyosha" is Tolstoy at his most clear. While reserved through character creation, as Alyosha does much but says little, his base moral convictions resonate as a lens through which Tolstoy decries the folly of servantile labor in the Russian Empire. Interestingly enough, the story was not published until 1905, multiple decades after serfdom was abolished in the states. Alyosha's moral imperative is to work fully—that to obey and complete tasks will guarantee. Through this mindset, Alyosha becomes a selfless protagonist, one devoted to work rather than himself. As has been seen, multiple Tolstoy protagonists act from a selfish standpoint, and it is through those actions that the tragedy of their arcs comes about. The fact that Alyosha comes from the opposite position may underline a turn for Tolstoy. Could he have seen a betrayal of the values he extolled, to act through and for others rather than one's self? It could be chalked up to general cynicism, though Tolstoy was undoubtedly deliberate enough to add more to the metaphor he was trying to convey.

As Alyosha is dying—Tolstoy plainly states Alyosha's imperative: "And in his heart was this: that, as it is good here, provided you obey and do not hurt anyone, so it will be good there" (373). Through a faith in work, Aloysha finds all the comfort he needs. The potential cynicism of Tolstoy comes out a bit near the end, where he remarks that Alyosha (on his deathbed) is "surprised" by something. Perhaps in these final moments, Alyosha too realizes the folly of his life. If this was Tolstoy's intention, it certainly marks a brutally dark and grim tone and outlook, similar in approach to "Ivan Illyich" yet retaining a unique quality that sets it apart. In keeping

with a “short and simple” moral imperative, the story itself is only six pages in length. Tolstoy minded his time well with the story, cutting swift and deep the uncertainty that events like death can bring.

What is unique about Alyosha’s overall moral imperative, and the way that Tolstoy constructs it, is that any search for the truth of the story comes solely from the initiative of the reader. Little is given to work with textually, yet it is because there is little that Tolstoy is able to entice. Because Alyosha’s moral imperative is to work with concern for little else in life, Tolstoy calls into question the very idea of work in relation to society. The idea of serfdom and its presence in the society of his time would have surely informed Tolstoy on the nuances necessary to craft this story. Surely there are many in the present day who would have mindsets and imperatives similar to Alyosha and who would be able to relate the mundane qualities of the work and still be able to have a varied response and takeaway from the story—those who despise mundane and back-breaking work may find also think ill of this story, as it seems to champion Alyosha’s ability to serve and ask for little to nothing in return. His purpose is to serve others through that brutal and potentially unforgiving work. Those who enjoy difficult work like Alyosha’s may find a champion in him. Through both of these viewpoints Tolstoy still shows his power to resonate and remain relevant over one hundred years after his death.

A further question that can be drawn from this story is the audience to which Tolstoy communicates the imperative. Are they the ones like Alyosha, or are they too far gone in Tolstoy’s mind? Is the audience those who are close to Alyosha’s imperative, yet are able to “course-correct?” I believe that because Tolstoy’s works generally employ a redemptive arc for characters, the latter audience is the one to whom he writes. Alyosha is clearly an other-serving individual, and the dullness by which Tolstoy relates his surroundings and actions speak to his

views of "doing good" as being unseen. As Alyosha suddenly dies, he completes everything he set out to do.

Alyosha is Tolstoy's representation of an other-serving individual at the maximum level, and he demonstrates this through both his use of brevity in the story's overall length, as well as through the description of Alyosha's mannerisms and characteristics. He is a character who is supremely unworried about the world around him, and finds the ability to be content in his day-to-day life. He is rewarded with the attention and general friendship of the merchant's daughter, and even when this relationship does not pan out the way he may have hoped it would, Alyosha shrugs his shoulders and moves on. Tolstoy's use of Alyosha is blunt and to the point, and though the interpretation of this story may come as an indictment of the servitude lifestyle common in Russia for the time, Tolstoy (in my view) does champion the ability of those in the other-serving role to find the joys in the what they do—through that they are rewarded. As Alyosha is content in his death, that is all that Tolstoy needs to say on the matter. Little conflict gets in the way of Alyosha feeling content in what he does.

Another question for consideration would be if Alyosha is Tolstoy's "standard," or the perfect representation of an other-serving individual. Given the story's brevity, "Alyosha the Pot" could very well stand as Tolstoy's own "thesis statement" of sorts. Tolstoy may also be indicating through the circumstances of Alyosha's life that youth is the optimal time to be other-serving—Tolstoy does not stray so far as to indicate that one's youth is the only time to actualize such focus, yet the potential for that interpretation naturally exists for the readers. Like mentioned prior with the degree of viewpoints that may result from this story, that notion too may not sit well with readers. Tolstoy would remain active in work into his old age, so if he meant this sentiment it surely would be one that didn't sit well with him either, but he must have

felt compelled to include it in the narrative. By combining the overview of Alyosha's work habits and unflinching adherence to parental authority (even when he is an adult), Tolstoy warns about blind loyalty, stressing individuality above all—something that can be turned into a (positively) selfish gain in the end. Alyosha isn't a wholly realistic model of being an other-serving individual given that his work is so unrelenting in that direction with little sign of an internal struggle, but Tolstoy indicates that he might prove the standard if we (the modern day audience) keep in mind our values and personal goals.

The Diary of a Madman

Summary. A man is being brought before a medical examination board to determine the extent of his mental health issues. He insists that he is "mad," while the board decides that he is not. In his diary, he recounts what led to this moment: as he began to find solid ground within society (a respectable and authoritative job, marriage and children, etc.), he experienced "fits" that were largely periods of existential agony and dread, seemingly brought on when he would go on business trips. Out of these trips of fear, the protagonist is pulled towards reading from the Bible, and attempts to move his life away from a life of wealth, and one centered around poverty, much to the dismay of his wife.

Analysis. Tolstoy left this story unfinished—so any analytical basis isn't all that it could be. The protagonist's moral imperative is called into question by himself—during the journeys and business trips he travels through, Tolstoy utilizes these narrative scenarios to instead build a journey inward. The reasoning for the fear the protagonist's experiences may come from the times (recounted at the beginning of the narrative) when he is told of the brutality against Jesus in the New Testament. ("What did they beat him for? … It was painful. Was it painful, auntie?") (29). On his first trip he thinks quickly "'Why am I traveling? Where am I traveling to?'"

touching off his own discomfort with his present life (31). Out of this discomfort comes a fear of living an unfulfilled life, that death would finish him off before certain experiences were done or before a purpose had been actualized. The protagonist never exactly spells out the reasons behind these thoughts—this may follow Tolstoy's apparent tradition of leaving the answers to questions in the hands of readers, or it may exist to articulate the unknown of mental illness.

The protagonist's arch in this story is directly tied to the moral imperative shift. He follows along with what is a societal prescribed path towards "happiness." Following this time, he is struck by massive bouts of fear. As these periods come during nightfall, Tolstoy clearly points out these times as lowly and grim, yet with a promise of a "dawn" to come in the mind. As the protagonist fosters these questions and concerns at what may be the darkest point of his life (and while he later admits to feeling free and at ease while "mad"), the potential for an upwards trajectory is all he has left. While the moral imperative shift is one from a selfish to a selfless point of view, Tolstoy clearly endorses this as success, noting later on when the protagonist begins to read the Bible again: "...this reading [of the saints] comforted me, presenting me with examples that it seemed more and more possible for me to imitate'" (37).

Even after this admission, the protagonist furthers his commitment to this new imperative shift by appearing to negate the reality of everything. He contents himself with the notion that "...if this does not exist, then there is no death or fear...and I am no longer afraid of anything" (38). This begs a further continuation of thought from the audience—if the protagonist's view has changed this dramatically, and if he views nothing as actually existing, then does Tolstoy extend a selfless viewpoint and active mindset to something that acts out of recognition of nothing existing?

While certainly a confounding predicament, Tolstoy paints an imperative that extends back to the thoughts and writings of ancient Greek philosophers who actively questioned the nature of their own reality. Though positioned in a manner from the start (in terms of his occupation), the madman is not self-serving, and in fact quite the opposite. The reason for this is readily seen in his constant bouts of panic attacks, and feelings that something within his life is wrong, or off. He is one of the few Tolstoy protagonists to actually show complete self-awareness throughout, and also one of the few to achieve a certain freedom from his initial occupation. As shall be discussed in the main section concerning "The Death of Ivan Ilyich," that protagonist realizes the mistakes of his past all too late, with intense physical and mental pain passing before he comes to peace and is at terms with himself. The madman's pain is not self-inflicted or originating within his own body, but comes from the outside. It becomes his imperative and duty to break through that hold and reach his true self. He feels he is insane ultimately because his ideologies and concerns run counter to his peers. They take work in stride and do not visibly show signs of fatigue. As the madman exists in a literary sense as Tolstoy's eyes into that world, he is undeniably gifted in the ability to read his circumstances accurately. Alyosha represented the understated importance of building an other-serving mentality. The madman of this story shows how important general self-awareness can be when coupled with the mentioned mentality.

As his "madness" takes hold, the protagonist initially fears the notion of a higher power, but grows to feel joy about this. Perhaps in ceding any control over his potential destiny, the protagonist consciously makes the decision to alter his own imperative, that to live simply and selflessly is the only rational way to live, because to exert control over one's course in life is foolish—it has (in the mind of the protagonist) already been written, and will work itself out.

Tolstoy practically reverses his position established in “The Prisoner” (that the will of an individual must come from total committed action from the mind and body) potentially indicating an evolution of thinking on his part.

The Prisoner of the Caucasus

Summary. Zhilin is a soldier serving in the Caucasus Mountains. During routine supply and personnel escort out from a fort, he (along with one of his companions—Kostylin) is captured by Tartars. As the days in enslavement go by, Zhilin plots his escape. Late one night, both escape through a hole dug by Zhilin. However, Kostylin gives away their position, leading the Tartars to recapture them—they are placed in worse quarters. Zhilin befriends a young Tartar girl, Dina, who helps him escape a second time. After walking all night, Zhilin is found by friendly Cossack forces. Tolstoy notes in a brief aside at the end of the story that Zhilin continued to serve in the Caucasus, and that Kostylin was ransomed and released a month later.

Analysis. The overall plot and moral imperative overtones to “The Prisoner” are quite simple (even Richard Pevear, the translator, remarks in the collection’s foreword that the story was taught to young Russian schoolchildren). Zhilin is captured and through his imperative actions to escape, he succeeds. Tolstoy stresses through Zhilin’s actions that if an individual is committed to a goal—they must follow through. With noting that Zhilin and Kostylin are captured after an initial attempt (and found themselves in worse conditions than before), it proves a remarkable strain of characterization that Zhilin is determined to carry on and escape completely.

During the story, Tolstoy also writes from the general perspective of the Cossacks and other Russian forces (sometimes noting these connections as “our men”). While clearly writing to a Russian audience, Tolstoy is able to extend this perspective device to reach beyond to a more

general readership (“we” are the ones who have to find Zhilin, or at least to think like him, that we may complete our goals through consistent undying action). Tolstoy subtitles “Prisoner” with a statement that the following short story is true. While no evidence is provided to clear up Tolstoy’s assertions, the subtitle allows the story to reach the audience from the start—indicating that all the moral imperatives of the story’s protagonist are true and that the audience themselves could do similar things. The story of Zhilin is not for him alone, but for all.

From the onset, this fusing together of audience and character harkens to Tolstoy’s activist side, yet all the same allowing for an intensive narrative action to break through. Zhilin’s motives for escape are pure in reason—showing a logical train of thought that again works to the universal angle of the story. In the opening passage, Zhilin receives a letter from his mother, who is ill and has “found a bride” for her son (3). Zhilin thinks the following: ‘“And in actual fact the old woman’s doing poorly; I may not get to see her again. Why don’t I go; and if the bride is nice, I might just married’” (3). Zhilin’s moral imperative is proved within this process to be one that is positively future oriented—to get a wife in Zhilin’s mind is to set himself up for a bright and fulfilling future. Moreover, the impending death of his mother is a natural bookend and bridge to the next stage of his life.

One must then consider what Zhilin’s initial capture represents. Simply having a positive family and future oriented imperative is not enough for the success of the individual—without a *dedicative force* acting in conflict to hinder the protagonist's resolve, Zhilin cannot reach the crux of his imperative goal. Had Tolstoy ended the story on a dour note, with Zhilin remaining captured or killed, the ultimate imperative message would have obviously been corrupted. As there is a positive outcome, Tolstoy confirms that to reach the goal of one’s moral imperative, one must undergo considerable trials and tribulations. Simply having the goal is not enough to

dedicate oneself, and the outside conflict acts well to rededicate Zhilin and the readers themselves. Additionally, Zhilin isn't simply waiting for a chance to escape—he ingratiates himself with his captors and their community. When a master has a broken wristwatch, Zhilin quickly fixes it. When an older man falls ill, it is Zhilin who successfully tends to him. There is certainly a level of resentment harbored by Zhilin against his captors—yet he does good by them.

By just briefly describing these good deeds done, Tolstoy is able to bring up a moral consideration for the situation. Should one do good only if it aligns with your goals, or should good be done regardless of the situation? While Tolstoy posits the question, he does not answer it, as Zhilin straddles both possibilities. From Zhilin's perspective the imperative of his good deeds would potentially lead to his captors agreeing to release, yet there is no absolute guarantee of that. Because of the ambiguity of the situation, Tolstoy acknowledges that a wider population also straddles the middle—"doing good" is a gray ethical area with no complete right or wrong answer with Zhilin's situation representing the inherent difficulties of these ethical considerations.

Along with the "good" done by Zhilin, he also exerts a great deal of confidence from the start against his captors. He isn't particularly violent towards them and seizes upon initial opportunities to improve the situation of his captivity—to try and bite back against the dedicative force that has gotten him to the present point. When asked to provide the Tartars with three thousand coins, Zhilin only offers five hundred, refusing to go beyond. By standing firm with his words, Zhilin indicates the intellect he has—as well as the general determination to achieve what he desires. This is crucial to his moral imperative of doing good and escaping—he opens himself to possibilities for how to actualize his goals rather than closing himself off—which one could argue he has every right to do, because he was captured during war. The fact that Zhilin wholly

dedicates himself to seeking opportunity continues to cement Tolstoy's overall commentary and the way he structures and crafts his protagonists and their scenarios.

However, as happens often with Tolstoy's protagonists, the dedicative force comes back around to test Zhilin. After he attempts to escape and is recaptured, Tolstoy notes that Zhilin and Kostylin's "...life became quite wretched. Their shackles were not removed, and they were not allowed to see the light of day" (22). As Zhilin feels the walls close in around him, it can be argued that he would lose determination—brutality and squalor beget no resolve. Yet despite it all, Zhilin continues to "do good," this time by playing with one of the village girls—Dina. She rewards his attention and good acts, with providing him the means to escape a second time. Zhilin's act against the dedicative force takes time more than anything to pay off and Tolstoy utilizes this moment to extend his thoughts on individual determinism. The person in particular must never abate in their aim to actualize their moral imperatives. If they do give up, much if not all would be lost, and the goal would fade away, Because Zhilin continued on his moral and ethical path—he was essentially rewarded with eventual escape.

Zhilin is a classic example in a Tolstoy story of consistently portraying an other-serving individual. It begins with his chosen profession—a soldier. Choosing a path of potential bespeaks certain bravery, of course, but it also indicates the potential for doing both good and bad unto others. Tolstoy places Zhilin in this crossroads and carries the audience along with him. It seems reasonable to any modern-day reader if Zhilin chose to act in a violent way towards his captors. Of any Tolstoy story, an act of violence by the protagonist is completely warranted. And yet despite all of the factors working against him, Zhilin maintains an undeniable composure, as if under a constant watchful eye that would treat him terribly if he were to do as much to his captors. One may wonder at the potential for autobiography that Tolstoy may have elected to

write into this story. He was a soldier during the Caucasus War, and during such time may have felt the way Zhilin did—potentially veering towards violence yet fearful of doing so. Certainly, an experience of this magnitude would have affected him deeply as he became a Christian anarchist. Zhilin is in many respects a protagonist without many flaws. From some authors, this may be viewed as a significant misstep, electing to craft two-dimensional or uninteresting characters. From my perspective, however, Tolstoy's ability to keep Zhilin at somewhat of a traditional two-dimensional level means that he can represent a greater philosophical teaching.

Zhilin even begins to doubt himself during these later stages. As he is waiting for Dina to provide him with the polre he will use to dig a hole, he is quite scared. "Zhilin sat there in the evening, thinking: 'What's going to happen?' He kept looking up. He could see the stars, but the moon had not risen yet. A mullah called, everything became quiet. Zhilin had already begun to doze off, thinking, 'The girl's afraid'" (23-24). This moment of doubt is brief, as his fears are assuaged just moments later when Dina comes through. Tolstoy never shows Zhilin acting on his doubts, because if he were to do so, it would undermine Tolstoy's commentary on the moral imperative. Zhilin rises above his doubts and because he do so—he succeeds. His strong-willed nature makes him capable to achieve such feats—making both his goals and imperatives actualized and delivered.

Master and Man

Summary. Dual protagonists inhabit this story. Vassily Andreich Brekhunov, a church warden, is looking to close on a real estate deal, one that will require a great deal of travel. To accompany him, a man named Nikita is selected. The two set off into the night in the middle of night. Not many words pass between them, and despite asking for directions from locals, they are

lost in a sense of direction. Some time is spent at barns along the way. After failing to reach a village they were told they would get to, the two men decide to take shelter in the forest.

While sitting down to rest, Vassily resolves to leave Nikita alone and take the horse in order to make his own way through to the town. As the conditions worsen, Vassily and the horse collapse in a snowbank, only to realize that it is the same snowbank they had sought shelter in. Returning to Nikita, Vassily uses his body for warmth—he experiences a variety of joyous visions, before dying due to the extreme temperature. Nikita is rescued the following morning by villagers the two had eaten with the night before. Tolstoy notes in the closing lines that Nikita died in old age, always wanting to get back to the state of death he felt on the cold night many years ago.

Analysis. "Master and Man" offers two separate imperative driven protagonists. In a simple expression, Vassily is portrayed as a foolhardy elite man who is driven foremost on the possibility of great profit, whereas Nikita is more reserved, tasked with performing the navigation and guidance of the trip to the real estate deal. Nikita is "...valued everywhere for his industriousness, dexterity, and strength at work…" while Vassily values "...above all, his cheapness" (210). Nikita is further shown (through interjections from his wife) that he is a necessary guide on this journey, though Vassily asserts that he could get along fine alone.

For most of the narrative, Nikita's potential growth outwards from the imperative Tolstoy sets for him is stunted by the demands of Vassily. This can be observed through an interaction between the two men as they set off—and to the modern eye reads like Robert Frost's. Vassily wishes to proceed on their journey by way of a straight road, yet "...the road was little used and had no stakes…" while Nikita's suggestion was "...marked by two rows of good stakes, but further" (217). Vassily wins out, yet their path becomes muddled, with Nikita saying "So we've

arrived...but there's no knowing where" (220). Vassily's imperative is clearly one driven by results—to get to the property the fastest in order to get the money. His moral system is one that is a self-revolving focus, when Nikita's is the exact opposite. Tolstoy notes in the story's opening that Nikita is a patron to the church where Vassily is warden, and it is a natural logical extension that his moral system is that of servitude—as is clearly evidenced by his actions of leading the trip and providing a sense of calm and logic where Vassily grows erratic.

Yet, considering how the narrative wraps up, the fact that Vassily stifles Nikita may have contributed to Nikita's survival. In the end of the story, like so many, the one who digs deep prevails. Further, it is because of Vassily's constant missteps and abandonment of Nikita by the end that allows Nikita to have a near-death experience and "get closer to God," an experience he would wait to get back to for the rest of his life. Through the consistency of Nikita's morals and actions within his imperative, he is rewarded by a higher power. It is unknown if Vassily had a different fate, yet one must assume that he was not rewarded in the same fashion as Nikita—"Master and Man" is essentially identical to "The Prisoner…" in that the protagonist(s) of the story do not have imperative shifts or a flux in their moral values, but their values are confirmed through a *reward*, Zhilin through escape and Nikita through survival from the cold night.

By concentrating on two central figures, Tolstoy makes his greatest dichotomy in "Master and Man." Centering on the scale of "right and wrong" Tolstoy can directly compare and contrast the actions of Vassily and Nikita to a receptive audience. Both men are clearly separate in their approaches to imperatives and goals while at the same time being representative of "flesh and blood" characters. The impatience of Vassily and the quiet determinism of Nikita can be readily seen in the modern world. Through a repetition of both those mentioned characteristics, Tolstoy

can entrench the men in their roles, acting to stress the reward that may come should one act in the vein of Nikita rather than Vassily.

The role of Vassily is noted quite well by John Hagan in his 1969 article "Detail and Meaning in Tolstoy's 'Master and Man'" as being one that crucially represents "...an archetypal figure in whom psychologically plausible motives are at the same time symbolic of very specific classes of sin which violate some of the most fundamental tenets of Christian ethics" (Hagan 33). One of the details Hagan describes is simply in the multi-layered coat worn by Vassily—indicating that he surrounds himself in such warmth to bury the fact that his practice of Christianity is noticeably disingenuous (34). It is a simple effort to include such a detail, yet I agree with Hagan regarding its overall importance. Use of little cosmetic details are important to service the overall theme or message of a story. The addition of the coat bolsters Nikita's payoff while at the same time solidifying Vassily's role as an extremely flawed and unrepentant individual.

Even in his determination Nikita still feels beholden to Vassily. When they decide to seek shelter, Vassily sits on the ground trying to gather warmth while Nikita is relaxing the horse: "'What's that you're doing?' asked Vassily Andreich. 'Unharnessing, what else? I've got no strength left,' Nikita said, as if apologizing" (236). Later on, in the night, Tolstoy devotes a considerable portion of description about Vassily's inner thoughts—all centering his monetary devotion: "He...thought of ever the same thing, which constituted the sole aim, meaning, joy, and pride of his life—of how much money he had made and might still make" (238). His mind is fully occupied, that as he observes the turn in weather conditions from bad to worse, he bemoans that he has no one to talk to, as well as admonishing Nikita for suggesting they seek shelter in the forest instead of pushing on towards a town.

As Vassily remains alone in his thoughts, the growing conditions eventually get to him and he attempts to go it alone. By cutting Nikita out of this section (in an inner-monologue sense), Tolstoy uses a literal force of nature to show how it may deepen the resolve (both good and ill) of humans. When Vassily decides to trek into the wilderness, his mind has strayed from making money and instead focuses on a desire for personal warmth. Of any moment in the story where a positive empathetic growth could occur, this would represent the best place. The fact that Tolstoy forgoes this development suggests for the umpteenth time that Vassily serves as a morally reprehensible figure—making it plainly advisable to a readership to be the Nikita in these situations and not the Vassily. Furthermore, when Vassily makes a roundabout way back to the shelter, his final comment regarding Nikita is perfectly representative of his character: "'[I]t's all the same if he dies. What kind of life he has got! He won't feel sorry for his life, but for me, thank God, there's something to live for…" and "'What, should I perish like this, for nothing?" (243).

After this, Tolstoy flips the perspective back to Nikita, who is content in his ways, though it wears on him. "The thought that he could...die that night occurred to him, but this thought seemed neither especially pleasant nor especially frightening to him...because his whole life was not a continuous feast, but, on the contrary, a ceaseless servitude, which was beginning to weary him" (244). There is no urge for Nikita to physically move out of the shelter like Vassily—proving an important antithesis to the motives of Vassily. Tolstoy circles around the notion of mortality, impressing that it could come at any time for anyone. Being content in what one has done is, in Tolstoy's mind, is the most important way to conduct one's life. Leaving trivial conquests such as monetary gains at the forefront of one's mind, it leaves the rest of the mind and soul to be devoured by nature, ending ultimately in regret. A little unlike "Alyosha the

Pot," Tolstoy isn't impressing the need for a simple mind, but one of a simple lifestyle. Vassily, on the other hand, is obsessed until his death, confusing Nikita. "And he remembers about his money...the buying and selling...it is hard for him to understand why this man called Vassily Brekhunov was busy with all he was busy with" (252). And in the end, this obsession is the end of Vassily—an oft too occupied mind leaves an unfulfilled life behind.

The self-awareness as described in the analysis for "Diary of a Madman" can somewhat speak to the overall view of Nikita's character. He remains other-serving throughout the tale, yet is seemingly unaware of these actions during the primary action. It is only after the death of a self-serving man that he realizes what transpired and how he fit into the equation.

The Devil

Summary. Evgeny Irtenev is a bright law school graduate. After a death in the family, he decides to manage the family estates and farm out in the countryside. During this time, he finds himself pulled to all sorts of women, including a long-lasting affair with a woman named Danila, a local married peasant. Feeling guilty about this association, Evgeny instead marries Liza Annensky, who becomes pregnant shortly thereafter. While preparing to start a family with Liza, Evgeny feels tempted many times to resume the affair with Stepanida. Liza becomes ill during pregnancy, but recovers, during which time Evgeny's guilt reaches a fever pitch. He confesses to an uncle about his impure thoughts (even though he hasn't acted on them). It soon becomes too much to bear, and he resolves to murder either Stepanida or Liza, thinking that this will rid him of the guilt. After this moment, two endings to "The Devil" are presented, as it appears Tolstoy played around with it a bit. In the first ending, Evgeny crumbles and commits suicide. In the alternate ending, Evgeny kills Stepanida and is sentenced to prison.

Analysis. "The Devil" in structure is a Tolstoy story of a life-panorama—with Evgeny acting as a representation of men during the time. Though Tolstoy became an anarchist Christian later in his life, he almost makes a mockery of the guilt construct of sin within that religion, practically spelling out Evgeny's journey into madness as something wholly illogical. Tolstoy makes clear from the start of the privilege Evgeny enjoys from the wealth his father built—the lusty attitude displayed in his youth is presented as a natural inclination of a young man. The guilt that haunts Evgeny's mind later on in his life stems from actions taken in his youth—before he ever met his wife, yet Evgeny's guilt persists to the point of being exacted through a death—either his own or that of Stepanida, depending on the ending. What Tolstoy offers from this story is not the tale of an individual's moral imperative winning out that can be spun for some positive light—that the audience should take heed of in conducting their own life. Instead, "The Devil" acts as a warning, with Evgeny's path proof of the destructive power a corrupted imperative can hold.

Most things in Evgeny's life are shown as being on an upwards trajectory—he has a wife and child on the way, yet his business affairs prove troublesome, and could be representative of the impetus of his descent. Tolstoy notes that "[t]o extricate himself from debt proved impossible…" yet "...despite these difficult circumstances, towards the end of the first year Evgeny felt very well" (178-179). Further, his married life was proving to be rewarding at its core: "...it was not what he had expected, it was something much better" (179). Liza, Evgeny's wife, is shown to be the bedrock of his mental stability—if she does well, he does well. When Liza decides to bring in peasant workers to do some spring cleaning for their house, Evgeny's mental state begins to slide, fearing that Stepanida will return, along with sexual temptation. Evgeny proves obsessed more so with the what-ifs in his life than the here and now.

Tolstoy writes clearly in this story of the all-enveloping and circulatory nature of mental illness. For a while, it can appear absent in one's life, only to suddenly creep back in. Evgeny feels this as well, as "[i]n his soul he had rejoiced many times at this liberation, and...this incident...revealed to him that he was not free" (185). Ironically, Evgeny spends much of his post-collegiate time dealing with the business failures of his father, therefore he is able to gather the foolish behavior of suppressing one's issues and sentiments, yet he willingly does so. Perhaps Tolstoy acknowledges through this development that a man in 19th century Russia is expected to suppress his emotions, that he is not supposed to discuss matters so personal with those nearest. In "The Devil," Tolstoy points a finger directly at a societal failure as much as an individual one. In many respects, Tolstoy indicates that Evgeny does not have the strength to "rise above," a stark contrast to protagonists such as Zhilin or Nikita.

Perhaps most ripe for analysis in "The Devil" is the choice by the translators, Richard Pevear and Larissa Volkhonsky, to include the story's alternate ending. Both depict a climactic act of violence committed by Evgeny. With his suicide in the original version, Evgeny's failure to exact any moral imperative (or one could argue that his own moral imperative stifles him, by causing an obsession) leads to an ultimate cancelation of the self, and his journey ends with a finality. The moral imperative he exhibited of attempting to stay pure and monogamous led to his suicide—the pressure to perform to the standards he set for himself became too much to bear, and his life was ended. With this ending, Tolstoy an outlook as he so often does with the decisions of the protagonists. As Evgeny's arc ended in suicide, should he be praised as a protagonist for holding true to the moral guidelines he had worried over for the entire story? Should Tolstoy be praised for depicting a mindset that leads an individual to suicide?

Evgeny himself is at a crossroads at this moment. “He put it to his temple, hesitated, but as soon as he remembered Stepanida, his decision not to see her, the struggle, the temptation, the fall, the struggle again, he shuddered with horror. ‘No better this.’ And he pulled the trigger (205). As he runs through his personal arc for a final time, Evgeny proves content with the last decision he makes. He sought a way out and it was granted by himself to himself. Evgeny is yet another Tolstoy protagonist to see the options laid bare in front of himself, and resolves to make the decision that will lead to peace. For Zhilin—escape. For Nikita—leading the way. For the Madman—letting go of his occupation. And for Evgeny—death, the most final of conclusions. This original ending also proves a consistency with the character development of Evgeny—he is never overtly violent towards others, always internalizing his feelings and thoughts. Tolstoy notes in the close of this ending that even Liza “...could never understand why it happened…” (205).

The opening of “The Devil” alternate ending is most curious, in that Tolstoy almost removes from Evgeny the imperative action that defines his journey. Similar to the original, Evgeny has a moment where he considers all that he might do to rid himself of the pain. In an outcry, he lets it be known that he cannot act alone. “‘My God! what am I doing?’ he cried suddenly and, clasping his hands, he began to pray. ‘Lord, help me, deliver me. You know I do not want to do anything bad, but I am powerless alone. Help me.’” (206). By separating Evgeny from an imperative, and depicting his attempt to call on a higher power, Tolstoy shows the folly of relying on a force outside one’s control in a dire moment. The last thing Evgeny would need in this moment would be a divine inspiration that would carry him to a decision he would regret, and that is exactly what happens in this alternate ending.

By starting himself on the "path of appeal," he loses all potential at exacting a plan that is in line with his own belief. He prays yet again, "...but felt at once that it was useless" (207). The zeal and emotion that may have been present in the initial prayer and moment are lost by this point, and the failed appeal generates another look in the mirror for Evgeny, that culminates in a self-doubt, one that corrupts his "normal trajectory" of ending his journey by suicide. "'Can I really not control myself? … But there isn't any God. There is the devil. And it's she'" (207). Evgeny concentrates all blame outside of himself, perhaps in an attempt to rationalize that the act of murder he will commit was brought on by another.

"The Devil" brings an interesting question into the fold regarding the strict motivations of Evgeny when looking at them from the perspective of the enumerated "self-serving" or "other-serving" characteristics. Evgeny in many respects shows a clear drive to live and work for his wife, to ensure that she is cared after and allowed a comfortable life. At the same time, Evgeny's occupation with his callous thoughts mark him as self-serving in another capacity. Because he is seeking peace of mind from the pressure he has placed on himself, he can easily be seen as a "self-serving" protagonist. If the latter possibility is accepted, the nature of the story's ending certainly changes. We already know that Evgeny's imperative shifted enough in the original ending to accommodate his realized purpose, but does this ending fall in line with the notion of Evgeny mirroring fellow self-serving protagonists and attempting to move his life in an other-serving direction before his death?

I believe this interpretation can be justified with Evgeny's scenario. Supposing he had given in to the temptation of reigniting his relationship with Stepanida, Evgeny would have undoubtedly been labeled as a self-serving character. However, because he makes the decision to end his own life, it shows (albeit somewhat dimly) that Evgeny is looking out for the

considerations and feelings of others—his wife in this case. Had the relationship been continued, he and his wife would have grown more distant, and greater internal pain would seep into Evgeny's mind, perhaps leading him to commit more self-serving acts. Therefore, because he ends his life, he stays in the same field as other protagonists—changed slightly, yet ultimately unredeemed.

In the alternate ending, by murdering Stepanida, Evgeny goes to prison, and "...returns home an enfeebled, irresponsible alcoholic" (207). He is left a shell of his former self, stripped of any personal initiative and consigned to full public malalignment. Tolstoy does not necessarily condone suicide with "The Devil" but certainly acts to show that one must not rely on the possibility of outside help to move forward with a decision—one's imperative must come from within. He notes in the conclusion of both versions that if Evgeny is considered a mentally ill individual, "...then all people are just as mentally ill" (206). Everyone has the same potential as Evgeny to act on their individual imperative, as well as to falter and search for outside answers.

This alternate ending must also be considered under the "self-serving" and "other-serving" lens. In it, Tolstoy pushes Evgeny towards the worst of self-serving actions—murder. Given that he is arrested for the crime and spends time within prison mulling over the decision he made, one must assume that Evgeny displayed the willingness to shift to an other-serving lifestyle. However, as he remained in prison for the rest of his life, any lifestyle remotely approaching that would have to be abandoned because the only action Evgeny could take towards any path within his life would have to, by virtue of him being imprisoned, self-serving. Perhaps this may indicate why Tolstoy abandoned the ending—though unique and certainly setting itself apart from the other stories in his wheelhouse, the fact that it does not go

along with the rest suggests the potential for Tolstoy to make an inconsistent fallacy, something that would have marred his entirely bibliography.

The ending may also serve to better spell out Tolstoy's state of mind at this point in his career. Certainly, writing to an ideology and consistent theme would have wearied any writer, and the temptation to branch out would most certainly have been strong and present. If the alternate ending was crafted first (there is no clear indication which was completed initially), Tolstoy could be observed as having caved into a self-serving path! Perhaps Tolstoy realized in the moment that it is a writer and an artist's primary duty to remain consistent in one's work. By keeping on this path, Tolstoy would prove himself worthy of the other-serving moniker that he gladly brings to his most cherished protagonists. Evgeny and Tolstoy are so very similar in this moment—both debating the decision to be made before deciding to "take the plunge." With "The Devil's" original conclusion, Tolstoy cements not only his consistency, but his potential and right to be studied critically in this capacity.

The Death of Ivan Ilyich

Summary. Ivan Ilyich is a self-serious and hardworking member of the Court of Law in the Russian Empire. His life has a natural rhythm to it, with a great deal of time spent early in the day on work and relaxation in the evening. Eventually, a gnawing pain in his side leads Ivan to consulting a doctor, who prescribes him rest. As the pain continues through the following couple of years, Ivan fears that worst—that the pain means a premature death. He then moves to permanent bedrest, where he faces severe existential crises. The pain in his side worsens to an extreme, leaving howls of despair echoing throughout the house. Following three days of brutal pain, Ivan dies.

Analysis. Unlike the prior stories analyzed "Ivan Ilyich" deals with the swiftness of an individual's mortality—the fickle nature of life itself. Other protagonists focus their energies on doing what they wish to be done, and succeeding in their goals. For Ivan Ilyich, his imperative and any actions taken to actualize it are all within his mind. Not much of note is done physically to indicate that Ivan has success in his aims. From the title alone, the notion of his death appears to suggest that he fails. In a slight deviation from the imperative presented in "The Devil," Ivan's actions are in thought prior to death. Before reaching his end, Ivan realizes that he always had the ability to "do right," and in Tolstoy's mind, that is enough of an imperative for this protagonist, that for all of Ivan's life, he has been preoccupied with his actions' effect on himself that he fails to note the effect on those in his life.

Such a preoccupation begins swiftly, with Tolstoy noting that "...Ilyich's life was most simple and ordinary and most terrible" (47). There is even a hint that what Ivan would wish for himself is not of his own imperative or volition, but of others. "He considered his duty all that was so considered by highly placed people" and "...all the passions of...youth went by without leaving big traces on him" (47-48). Ivan concentrates his mind on a singular aim—career advancement, and acts to achieve immense heights by callusing his true person. By closing the doors to a youthful energy, Ivan willingly closes himself to a harsh fate, yet one through which he redeems himself by the end. There are hints of Ivan attempting to reach back to simpler times through card games, yet even in these pursuits he is known for "...calculating quickly and subtly, so that he always came out the winner" (50). For Ivan, every task or goal he sets for himself must be so clear-cut as to guarantee himself the win.

Tolstoy clearly chastises this mindset in a couple of ways through the story. The main one obviously being through Ivan's painful fall to death—it is a metaphorical thorn in his side that he

did not anticipate because his imperative at the time was one in which Ivan carried out his life in a tunnel-vision sort of way. By obsessing over the curveballs thrown his way, Ivan is pushed immediately to his end. Ivan seeks to define and categorize every aspect of his life so that it works to meet his own needs. His wife is characterized as being "...irritable and demanding," yet we as the audience cannot take this position to be one of impartial truth. Because this is Ivan's story, every character is shaped in such a way that diminishes their impact, and elevates his own.

Through his own "categorization," he often misses the mark. Marriage is seen by Ivan as necessary from a societal standpoint "...to lead a decent life approved of by society…" and when this fails to match his expectations, he retreats to a "...fenced-off world of work" (52). Any difficulty with his family is viewed as a bridge he refuses to cross, to the point where "[t]he whole interest of life was concentrated for him in the world of his work…" (53). When his work prospects dim and he takes a vacation with his family, he feels "...an unbearable anguish" (54). The imperative aim of Ivan's life nearing the end of his second decade of marriage is one that values a concentrated and absolute effort at working—doing so to obtain power and societal prestige. He recognizes it as a duty that must be done. Although Tolstoy notes the little pleasures Ivan receives from structuring his life in this manner, it is clear that this is merely a method of justification he acts through. Ivan thinks of a higher society first, and then himself. The only degree of happiness that comes following the vacation is when he is promoted to a position outside of town.

It becomes more evident in the post-vacation section of the story that Ivan's folly lies directly in the fact that his imperative is falsely constructed. The protagonists in other narratives have a uniquely individual mindset that is not besieged by the apparent expectations of others watching. When Ivan takes up the new position and moves to a new house, he envisions all the

different ways it could be decorated. In his mind, any who are immensely rich and happen to visit his house would be impressed with all that has been put in place. Ivan purchases "...cheaply antique objects…" and "[t]he result was charming…" for those who visited (56-57). Tolstoy writes that Ivan is like many "...who want to resemble the rich," and everything that is put together is specific enough—that "...to him it all seemed something special" (57). After moving, Ivan still continues his streamlined and "efficient" lifestyle of work first. "Easily, pleasantly, and decently…" are three terms constantly used by Tolstoy when describing Ivan's mood, so much so that one can naturally assume the mocking attitude they are written with.

Through the dull process in which Ivan envelopes himself, it is as if the pain that ultimately takes his life is a deliberative force not necessarily acting in conflict against him, but pushing him towards the pinnacle and epiphany that defines his life. Tolstoy writes of Ivan's life in this recognition of a dull quality: "So they lived. The social circle that formed around them was of the best sort; they were visited by important people and by young people" (59). From the onset of the narrative to this point, Ivan strives so greatly for that recognition—as Tolstoy throws it away practically with a careless attitude, it tells with a great finality that Ivan is not meant to be remembered for his social positioning. When the side-pain besets Ivan, the doctor notes that this is "...not a question of Ivan Ilyich's life, but an argument…" (62). Ivan wishes that the ailment is quantifiable.

"He could not repress it…" speaks exactly to the change that Ivan *must* go through. It's as if he suddenly becomes aware of his own role in the narrative (63). Even during a game of cards, something in which he was so intently focused before the pain, he views the players' triumphs as completely trivial. The change within Ivan's mind is something that came from a factor outside of his control. He doesn't try to fight it greatly, as other characters mention that he isn't the best

with keeping up on treatment, and his overall attitude towards it is confusion, as if his own prescribed path towards life has been rendered null and void before his eyes, and he cannot comprehend how to proceed. All of Ivan's life was spent on actualizing an idealized lifestyle that he failed to factor in death.

"'There was life, and now it is going, going, and I cannot hold it back. Yes, why deceive myself?'" (68). The moral imperative that Ivan exhibits up to this point is one that demands hard controllable work. If work is done, good or better things will result. His imperative shifts once the pain and illness sets in, now demands an answer to his own place in things. It is similar to the one that leads for most of the narrative, though the "hard controllable work" turns into "hard thought." The worst thing imaginable will result either way—death. Therefore, Ivan does the best he can within his own agency and acts to make sense of it all, that way he can perhaps get a morsel of truth before the end arrives. An ironic strain slightly arrives with the sicker Ivan becomes as "...no one pitied him as he wanted to be pitied" (76). Because so much of his life before pain was spent on improving his own station, he is left with nothing significant in care to leave behind.

"Being alone is a horrible anguish…" realizes Ivan, and along with his stunted attempts to arrive at the truth of his hard work and hard thought, Tolstoy provides what is arguably his darkest ending (78). As the days draw closer to his death, Ivan is given some reassurance by doctors that he will outlast the illness, and Tolstoy notes the hope by which he receives these statements. This leads the reader to wonder completely if Ivan should improve his condition, would he continue his life as before, or would there be different considerations he would focus on? The reader must confront these options, as so often it is easy to believe that things will change in moments of despair, only to find that everything remains the same if the situation

improves. Even though Tolstoy posits these questions, he renders all reader thoughts moot and irrelevant because Ivan Ilyich dies at the beginning of the narrative—the remainder of these points being flashbacks. Perhaps through this decision (structure through flashback inclusion and the title of the work), Tolstoy mimics the hope that many could feel when faced with certain death or doom.

Gerald Lang, in his article "What Does Ivan Ilyich Need To Be Rescued From?" pushes for a view that Ivan's philosophical considerations during the end of his life do not make him a better person, but rather "...exposes and magnifies what was always objectionable about him" (Lang 325). Lang provides arguments made by other scholars that in Ivan's death comes a certain rebirth of his character, though Lang disagrees with this sentiment and even extends that had Ivan been less self-involved in life, he still would have been ill prepared to meet his own death and recognize his own mortality. Lang also makes known that Ivan's death as viewed through a redemptive lens should not be the overall interpretation of the narrative, because there is a pervading notion of an "everyone dies alone" attitude that is less universal but more individualistic. By this logic, Tolstoy cannot provide a universality to the "death question" and how that can alter one's moral imperative, but rather that the audience must accept from this story an individualist strain—that everyone's death is resolved in different manners. I slightly disagree with Lang's interpretation, viewing it more so as the universality of Ivan's death begets an individualist takeaway. Because Ivan's imperative shifts significantly in the narrative's close, the potential for the reader's own redemption is vitally important.

James Baillie, "The Expectation of Nothingness," notes that Ivan is not a psychological abnormality, and even pays lip service to his mortality, yet is nevertheless shocked when he discovers that "he *will die*" (Baillie S188). Baillie extends an argument that the average

individual may utilize “screening techniques” in order to “appreciate” or understand the nature of their mortality. The first as described by Baillie, is one wherein the subject deflects personal attention. In the case of Ivan Ilyich, his moral imperative is so set on furthering his own individual gains, that when confronted with the prospect of his own death, his “...attention [is] diverted to an immediate concern, such as...a card game with friends, a work-related duty, or marital quarrel” (S188). The second technique is noted by Baillie as being difficult to describe, perhaps because it must be greatly inferred through one’s reading of the text, wherein “...something keeps the full reality of death at bay, so that it can be a subject of philosophizing,” and this is precisely where Ivan’s mind turns towards the end of the narrative (S188).

The position offered by Baillie is a vitally important line of thinking to understand the journey of Ivan and his moral imperative. Although Ivan utilizes the screening techniques to block out any potential of mortality, it in some ways underlines the truth of Ivan’s imperative—he is always seeking to live. Of course, the way in which Ivan conducts this imperative is less than ideal and considerably flawed and self-serving. Even taking aside the screening techniques, his purchasing of material comforts says that Ivan may seek to actually abate the rolling course of death and mortality, that to occupy an esteemed societal position would be to bounce back that course. Through the use of the second screening technique—when greater philosophical thinking enters the equation—Ivan centers his imperative to live in a way that is ultimately *other-serving*. By staying on the line of the first technique, which buries the lede and forces the protagonist to smother themselves in other endeavors to internally delay the inevitable, Ivan could simply never become other-serving.

In this moment is when Tolstoy introduces a crippling addition to Ivan’s illness—he becomes entirely incapacitated, bedridden for what would prove to be the rest of his life.

Because Ivan is bereft of all other activities, he can do nothing else than focus his mind on the inevitable which is now completely unavoidable from a mental standpoint. Further, he can longer do much else for himself, rendering all self-serving possibilities null and void. Of course, there is still some self-serving thought—he can now only focus on the legacy he leaves behind. Still, in this thought his family is included, meaning that what he may decide to do can only be other-serving as he will no longer be alive to take part in it or witness the results.

Ivan represents the ultimate of a protagonist shift between serving lifestyles. Even more important in this observation is noting the times throughout the narrative that Ivan appears somewhat sedated or confused by his choices. He redecorates his family's house not necessarily for them, or himself, but for an illusory concept of societal acceptance. Because he observes others doing this, he believes in the aim of his own imperative—to climb the social ladder. I have little doubt that Ivan in this moment is acting out of what he believes are his family's true needs. Though self-serving to the max, Ivan is convinced otherwise. Unlike the struggles of Evgeny, Ivan's turn comes about from an outside force, yet one that is arguably an internal one. Tolstoy's commentary on such an event also shifts the perception of the audience. Again, in a dissimilar fashion to other protagonists, Ivan is put on his back and spends much of the story's remainder in constant thought. Evgeny and the madman, for example, carry on their inner thoughts with outside action. Changes are happening around themselves that inform their inner pull from a self-serving mentality to that of an other-serving one. Ivan is completely isolated, representing Tolstoy's heretofore metaphorical writing of the protagonist as an isolated body.

Given that Ivan is alone with his thoughts during this time, Tolstoy drives his point further home—the protagonist within these scenarios simply cannot be redeemed, yet they may think themselves on the path to salvation. In a sense, Ivan's journey proves the beating ground

for Tolstoy, as well as his display of personal theory. That Ivan is able to partially course-correct prior to his death remarkably walks the line between redemption and the unredeemed self, and Tolstoy in this sense is quite playful—he teases an audience that has followed him far, leading then to potentially expect something to change. This is similar in some ways to how Tolstoy approached "The Devil" and its ending, though his decision to stick with the original cements Ivan's final "thoughts" as continuing on the path enumerated during the prior stories. Still, Ivan is one of the foremost protagonists through which we as the audience can observe the *shift* of imperative tendencies and goals.

In this way Ivan is something of an "in-between" protagonist. Though he still does not redeem himself in the traditional sense, he represents a true imperative shift that can be readily evidenced through pages of the transition period. Evgeny, Nikita, and the madman, for example, had a particular inciting incident that brought about a concern within themselves (Evgeny and Stepanida, Nikita and Vassily's death, and the madman with the business trip). The nature of Ivan's affliction—with its considerable roving nature, marks a certain existentialism that may prove the benchmark of Tolstoy's work in short fiction—Ivan is the Mona Lisa to his bibliography—not the first achievement, nor the last, yet the most defining.

The hard thought that occupies Ivan by the end of the story is split into "...two states of mind:" "...despair and the expectation of an incomprehensible, terrible death…" and "...hope and the interest-filled process of observing the functioning of his body…" while "...pictures of the past appeared to him" (85-86). As Ivan cycles through the past and attempts to categorize the present as he is wont to do, he realizes ultimately that "it's impossible to resist" (87). By resigning himself to any sort of control that he may exact over this elusive final element within his life, he is able to actualize his imperative—an imperative to understand the world and rise

above to a new plateau of thought. Even as this began to come about, the "...justification of his life clutched at him…" and he tries to understand what he must do finally to do right by his family. He realizes that he must let the pain wash over him, letting the process of moving on become easier for his family. "Let there be pain," says Ivan (91).

"Instead of death there was light" (91).

Father Sergius

Summary. Kasatsky is an extremely bright cadet in the military focused above all in "...attaining perfection and success in every task that came his way, [and] earning people's praise and astonishment" (257). When his fiance reveals her infidelity, he resolves to become a monk, seeming to be the only way he can achieve the perfection desired. After seven years of tutelage, Kasatsky becomes Sergius and grows discontented with the state of knowledge—he feels at that moment that he has done and learned all he can. During this time, he is sexually tempted and as a result is forced by his monk peers to become a recluse—which he stays as for many years. He views "devils" as being within him, and given his perfectionist strain, begs higher powers to absolve them.

A woman comes by his cell having lost her way, and Sergius tends to her. After both never become intimate, she asks for forgiveness, which Sergius grants her, and she becomes a nun. The event became famous and for many years afterwards people visited the reclusive Sergius. Suddenly, he appears able to heal the sick and lame, which leads to more notoriety. Respecting the attention, yet not sure if it is best for him, Sergius leaves his cell. Following another period of self-doubt, he resolves to find a woman he and other children had tormented years prior. Finding peace after a conversation with her, he moves on to Siberia.

Analysis. Sergius exhibits one of the most defining and committed moral imperatives of any Tolstoy protagonist. As mentioned in the summary, Sergius demands personal perfection. Even when the "fault" lies with others (such as his fiance cheating on him), Sergius completely extricates himself from the situation—moving elsewhere to seek the ultimate perfection through spiritual means. Throughout the narrative, he never abates in this cause, going so far as to one to move to a reclusive monastic state and later becoming a vagabond. This is doubly interesting considering the well to do live he had set up prior to becoming a monk. The fact that he gives it all up sets himself in line with other Tolstoy protagonists—clearly and utterly committed to an ideal. He is the only one of the protagonists analyzed that undergoes a momentous identity shift, from cadet to "Father." When questioned by family as to why he made the decision to become a monk, he replies that "...the call of God was higher than any other consideration…" (261). As Sergius is set up to be a perfectionist, it somewhat makes sense that he would try his hand at a monastic lifestyle—his fiancee's deception bespoke a connection that was imperfect and it drive Sergius to a considerable extreme.

"When he remembered these things in good moments, he rejoiced at having rid himself of those temptations" (263). However, by callusing himself to the outside he makes himself vulnerable to challenges. This is a position Tolstoy clearly took with Evgeny and Ivan—they both concentrated too heavily on betterment that they met their own end, yet they both realized this and to some extent made peace with it. So too does Sergius make peace with his concentrations and path in life, though by doing so, he serves Tolstoy's purpose of displaying the certain faults that lie in an individual who commits to one thing. By striving hard for perfection, other important things could easily fall to the wayside. Even when Sergius receives news of his mother's death, it is viewed "...with indifference. All his attention, all his interests were

concentrated on his inner life" (263). Though Tolstoy himself became an anarchist Christian later in life, there is borderline condemnation coming across in the language used with this passage.

Sergius is the sheltered protagonist whose moral imperative is personal perfection. Even as a monk dedicated to the most spiritual of pursuits, in an occupation that one could argue is humanity at its pinnacle, to seek for spiritual knowledge and understanding, the fact that he closes himself off so heavily may indicate that no matter what Sergius dedicates himself to—he can never reach perfection, for such a trait is unobtainable. Perfection is not in the human condition, and Tolstoy makes it clear through this story. Sergius strives to "...hear nothing except the words of the prayers...and to experience no other feelings except that self-forgetfulness in the consciousness of the fulfillment of his duty…" (265). Out of this denial of surroundings, Sergius grows paranoid that those monks in the abbot are talking about him, plotting against him. There is a clear inciting moment for Sergius to think this way—with the relationship had with his former fiancee—and it propels him to act in a further inward manner.

As noted in the summary of this story, interactions with others (especially women) cause Sergius to stagger, begging higher powers for forgiveness, and leading to a greater reclusive lifestyle. His system of acting through his imperative is as such that if perfection cannot be obtained through a certain way of doing things, the only act left to do is to retreat and try again, this time more closed off than before. He grows distant from those around him and "...felt his weakness and inability to fight against temptation alone...he confessed to the sin of pride…" (266). As Sergius is clearly willing to admit to his every fault and seek recourse, it is reasonable to assume that a portion of the readership of the late 19th century would find these characteristics admirable. As the Russian Orthodox Church would have been considerably dominant during this time (and in general a sizable Christian hierarchy and presence is observable in almost every

major Western state), a path towards spiritual purity may have been seen as "correct" for the times. However, the reclusive tendencies of Sergius speak to a refutation of human interaction. By willingly moving to the cell to be completely alone, Sergius removes himself from the human condition.

Still, any struggle that Sergius faces is defined as both "...doubt and fleshly lust" (269). During these moments, he completely turns himself over to a "God." By doing so, Sergius undermines his own imperative—the higher power that he beseeches does not appear to listen, and any sort of doubt or lust that plagues Sergius during his reclusive phase continues unabated. Though he for many pages views this to be an absolute negative, it starts to turn into a positive—his imperative for perfection necessitates personal action that is not helped by another force or reliant upon anything but his own will and determination. When a woman stops at his cell for warmth from the cold weather, Sergius internally bemoans the lustful attitude that he is feeling, even though his desire to suppress any thoughts hurts his resolve. "...Sergius heard, felt, that danger, perdition, was here, over him, around him, and he could only save himself only by not turning to look at her for even a minute. But suddenly the desire to look came over him" (275).

In this moment, instead of letting a normal experience wash over him, and allowing himself to aid a traveler, Sergius succumbs to internal doubts and severs his left index finger with an axe. He admonishes the woman, asking her "...why did you want to destroy your immortal soul?" (276). The woman is ashamed to the point of ending her present path in life and becoming a nun. Even though Sergius physically harms himself and shames a woman into becoming a nun, no personal catharsis arises. Tolstoy may have included this act to indicate the absurdity of Sergius' conflict—in that there is no concrete dilemma, and it is mostly self inflicted, both

mentally and physically. Ironically still, after an incident of harm, more people seek out Sergius, hearing about the situation with the woman turned nun, convinced that he can perform miracles.

The prospect of Sergius being able to heal naturally provides a biblical allusion. Does Tolstoy in this moment intentionally compare Sergius to Jesus? Or does he mock a societal tendency to place an overt amount of attention and faith into something that may be completely erroneous? I believe Tolstoy is answering both in this situation. Sergius is meant to be compared to Jesus but only in the way that the reader may see Sergius' growth *away* from being a Jesus figure. If Sergius had followed his moral imperative as Jesus—until a brutal demise—then no individual growth would be gained from the narrative, but because Sergius diverts from the path of Jesus' work indicates growth for himself but also adds a great deal of agency for Sergius in the individual sense. Further, in mocking a societal tendency to focus on the odd stories of "magic" or healing, Tolstoy is able to prop Sergius up so he can be elevated through his growth later in the narrative. Having any character in absurd circumstances makes the growth away from absurdities to be all the more impactful.

Sergius begins to feel the burden of his ways—the toll that pushing so strongly towards personal perfection could gather such a considerable following. It became so significant to the point that Sergius "...wanted to rest, to breathe the fresh air, he felt that it was necessary for him...the crowd of people rushed to him, asking for his blessing and seeking advice and help" (281). It is with great reluctance that he accepts the responsibilities of a public monk-recluse turned celebrity and he cannot fully equate or reconcile how he lived alone and cared after only for himself, to being pressured by the masses to perform miracles, and to heal the sick and lame, something he does not believe he can do. "'They come from thousands of miles away, it is written up in newspapers, the sovereign knows, in Europe, in unbelieving Europe, they know,' he

thought. And suddenly he became ashamed of his vanity, and he started praying to God again" (285). Sergius marks this as a turn within himself, that because a focus has turned onto him by the general public, he has failed in his general duties as a reclusive monk.

The one event that considerably haunts Sergius is the bullying he did as a young man to the woman Pashenka. As the horror in his mind reaches a fever pitch, Sergius contemplates suicide. At this moment when his personal imperative appears to have failed him, it rises again to propel him forward to atone for what he did. Tolstoy writes this revelation as if Sergius has been visited by an angel—yet in this vision the "angel" does not command Sergius to act, and he decides to go to Pashenka out of his own volition. It is in this moment of the narrative that the moral, personal imperative of Sergius is finally actualized. Prior to the Pashenka decision, most everything that had been done by Sergius was either made at the behest of others (such as becoming a recluse) or by himself yet out of a desire to appease a higher power. Going to see Pashenka is entirely for himself and not for other individuals or higher powers. The angel says to Sergius that Pashenka is "...where lies your salvation" (288). In this moment Sergius is also free of the constraints he placed on himself. Moreover, Sergius realizes that his quest to attain personal perfection is all for naught—that by conducting himself in this manner, he allows for a certain bias to seep in, realizing that to learn from others leads to a better understanding of the self. This is what he requests from Pashenka.

The time he spends at her house is considerably short, with some elongated reminiscences and small talk, It is clear from the relative brevity of the section that Sergius contents himself quite quickly, yet he is embarrassed at the acknowledgement that he has atoned for what he once did, almost as if the relinquishing of the forgiving in a way absolved it completely—as if any positive or negative act had never taken place. After taking leave of

Pashenka, Sergius wanders the country. "'Pashenka is precisely what I should have been and was not. I lived for people under the pretext of God, she lives for God, fancying she's living for people'" (295). Sergius, while unacknowledged that he has changed for the better, comes to terms with his own selfishness that pervaded his life—stemming from his youthful desire to know more and to dedicate himself along these major lines. He admits that "'...it was all soiled, overgrown by human glory. Yes, there is no God for someone who lives, as I did, for human glory. I will seek Him…'" (295).

Unfortunately, modern critical analysis of "Father Sergius" is sparse. Most of the sources I was able to cull from online databases are from the mid to late twentieth century. Even so, I deem them worthy of discussion. Margaret Zilokowski posits that Tolstoy intentionally structures "Sergius" as a life of a saint, better known as hagiography. The rationale for this hypothesis comes from the opening portion of the story, which deals with Sergius' childhood. Zilokowski furthers her point by discussing the manner by which Tolstoy describes Sergius—noting his "...purity...eventually attracts both monks seeking spiritual leadership and others seeking guidance…" while his actions so often bespeak general humility (Ziolkowski 67). Ziolkowski admits that Sergius' quickness to violence and submission to temptation offer clues to his destruction and eventual path to redemption. In an odd note, Ziokowski praises Sergius' self-mutilation in the middle portion of the narrative, noting that his acts of virtue increase following this apparent triumph. Further, through the act of self-harm in order to fend off temptation, he is able to "cure" or heal others. It is only in this moment of full capability to do good that Sergius falls to temptation, as Ziokowski points to the great amount of inner conflict and "warring" he endures. Even while committing himself to considerable acts that further his "perfection," he constantly bends under the pressure of temptations.

Ziolkowski views this as necessary for the development of the saints' tale Tolstoy is conveying, or at least seeming to do so, which is argued by Ziokowski to be the turn into a redemptive and humanistic story. I am not personally further with other saints' tales, and cannot reaffirm or challenge the evidence presented by Ziolkowski's arguments, though I can agree with her ultimate point. Sergius is a normal human who is simply pulled to the extreme ends of attempting to perfect himself—yet the further he continues on that line, the less of himself he becomes, yet he cannot retreat from it, because he has gained a sizable audience. He cannot retreat from what he has devoted himself to outwardly, leaving all that is left to retreat *inward* and revisit the sins of this past, such as atoning to Pashenka. It does make sense (from Ziolkowski's logic) that Tolstoy is writing in opposition to praise of monastic ways and institutions. By fostering a body that corrodes the individual and ultimately weakens their resolve (as in the case of Sergius), they cannot continue on that path while at the same time attempting to gain back their true humanity.

As is clearly the case with all of Tolstoy's major short stories, the moment a character steps out of outside forces or institutions and reorients their own moral imperative, the moment they can realize the truth of their purpose and potential. Tolstoy notes that this does not come without significant sacrifice—an individual must be prepared to give a lot physically and/or mentally to achieve that personal state of mind and purpose. Thus, while the tale of Sergius is not one of complete perfection, nor one of a model-individual, it nevertheless stands as a testament to the *potential* of an individual. Through his trials and tribulations, Sergius proves that no one is too far gone for redemption, certainly echoing sentiments from "The Death of Ivan Ilyich." Harry Walsh and Paul Alessi in "The 'Apophthegmata Patrum' and Tolstoy's 'Father Sergius,'" note that "Sergius" was composed around ten years after Tolstoy left the Russian Orthodox

Church. Such a departure was proved to have been significant in Tolstoy's own path of writing and dedication, as he became a fervent Christian anarchist. In a sense, Tolstoy had a similar path to that of Sergius. After being certain of a way or path, and deciding to leave that path behind, Tolstoy set out to find a God in the same way Sergius did—not for himself, but through others.

Walsh and Alessi also note that Tolstoy's writing period for "Father Sergius" was riddled with charitable work and organization he conducted. Noting as such gives Tolstoy a potential desire to write out from his own experience and into that of a fictional character. That, in Tolstoy's mind, could justify the present path he set for himself, in turn creating a document yet fictional "success story," that could potentially last through history and be analyzed even if the in-the-moment work he conducted did not have a tangible impact. Tolstoy was always mindful of the power of words. Walsh and Alessi include diary entries of Tolstoy in the article, proving how (over the course of many years in the 1890s), Tolstoy was fundamentally concerned about what Sergius out to represent, that no false steps should be taken on his part, in order to better reflect something echoed in one of his religious treatises—because many Christians (and in turn a large swath of the world population) believe in an eternal life that is contingent on the acts that they commit in this life, they become all too consumed with the self. In a sense, many individual's moral imperatives are slightly askew—good may be done, yet it is done at an immensely selfish rate. True Christianity, in Tolstoy's mind, requires the self to be nearly reactionary when it comes to doing good—there must not be a thought or consideration given for the benefits it could bring to the individual committing the act. Again, through Sergius' characterization and his own slight alteration of his moral imperative, Tolstoy implies that the rest is possible for the world entirely.

The "Patrum," central to the Walsh/Alessi article, concerns an argument similar to that of Ziolkowski—tying Tolstoy's mode of approach to writing to Sergius as being directly tied to inspiration from near-ancient texts on the life of monks. The two also touch on the reasoning behind Tolstoy's arguments in the narrative, namely the purported anarchistic lens of Sergius leaving the monastery. As Tolstoy elected to leave a religious institution, it is logical to assume that his work after the period (both in writing and otherwise) would concern the efforts and potential of the *individual*. That is something characteristic of Tolstoy's work throughout his life, and if one was only familiar with the work he had done prior to leaving the church, it would come as no surprise that the stories written intensified this aim. Indeed, many of the stories discussed in this thesis bear similar traits, though not necessarily identical to "Sergius."

"Prisoner" concerns the needs to escape—though the soldiers' struggle is not institutional in nature, the circumstance they find themselves in was brought about by a brutal one—the armed forces. In "Master and Man." the master could be stylized as to represent a completely deluded Sergius—someone who in a pursuit of perfection caved in, or grew increasingly apathetic to the point where their ego has consumed their total mindset—no redemption is possible. In "Ivan Ilyich," it takes an illness to remove the title character from the legal institution, and in that moment, is he finally able to be free to think and, ultimately, free to "course-correct" himself just before his death. Unlike the latter story, in which the protagonist does what he falsely perceives to be other-serving activity. Sergius is in a sense an extension of the characterization Tolstoy pushed forward in "Ivan Ilyich." Throughout the bulk of the narrative, Sergius is actually committed to both self-serving and other-serving activity. Work as monk is naturally other-serving—he is doing acts for the community, yet the impetus for that strain came from a self-serving standpoint, when he internally strove to better himself mentally.

Unlike Ivan's end, when he is perhaps roundly defeated by the prospects of failing to reach a redemptive state, Sergius soars in these realizations, and although contented in these realizations as his fellow protagonists were, Sergius is the only one to maintain his freedom in the end. Nikita's realization was met by death, the madman was borderline institituionalized, and Evgeny committed suicide. Zhilin may be the only argument against this view, though even that can be rendered null and void in a roundabout manner. Though Zhilin finds his freedom at the close of his story, he accepts a responsibility within the military. As such, he is still constrained within an institution. He is free "on paper" but not in a realistic sense. Sergius is able to find the happy medium between the two points, recognizing his selfish behavior while at the same striving to "do better." Sergius' imperative, as a result, only slightly changes. Instead of being focused on bettering himself mentally, he now seeks to better himself mentally by learning from others' experiences—with these experiences enriching his life rather than elevating him above others.

Conclusion and Points Results

Primary Character	**Result**
Nikita	**+3 Points** Entirely Other Serving (End Result: Inner Peace and Catharsis)
Madman	**+2 Points** Slightly Self-to-Other Serving (Enf Result: Catharsis)
Zhilin	**+2 Points** Mix of Other and Self Serving (End Result: Escape)
Sergius	**+2 Points** Majorly Self Serving with Slight Transition (End Result: Catharsis)
Alyosha	**+1 Point** Entirely Other-Serving (End Result: Death)

Ivan Ilyich	**-3 Points** Entire Self-Serving (End Result: Minimal Catharsis Prior to Death)
Evgeny	**-3 Points** Entirely Self Serving (End Result: Suicide)

The individual of a Tolstoy story is beset by temptations both internal and external—some struggling with an iron will to battle back the move to become a self-serving individual, while others are content on that path of a self-serving lifestyle, only realizing the error of their ways when it may be too late to turn back. It is clear that Tolstoy does not preach a warm and wholly redemptive view of the capacity for humans to encounter their own selflessness, but he certainly pursues a realistic aim. The humans of his stories are imperfect, and as they cannot be without fault, no change can come about in them that would completely alternate the true core of their character. What Tolstoy says to a modern, 21st century audience is this: we all must take a hard look at ourselves and to our surroundings, and must look for the improvements that can be made.

This reading of Tolstoy is especially prescient for a 21st century audience due in part to how technology has evolved. With consumer culture and media intake swirling around much of the western world daily the ability to act in an other-serving manner is certainly made difficult given the many available distractions that might weigh down an individual's resolve. By seeking personal gratification through the consumer culture or mass media, Tolstoy's viewpoint indicates that a redemptive state could never arise in the modern individual. Such a reward cannot in the mind of Tolstoy come from individual means (being self-serving or never looking out to those "surroundings", pigeonholing oneself in the here and now). Further, a personal reward if it is gained the "right way" can never be guaranteed, and we must be prepared to commit ourselves to long periods of work for potentially no reward at, casting aside all pursuit of personal

gratification. This is a trade-off that Tolstoy stresses as vital to the individual betterment. The short stories analyzed in this thesis act in a dual-reflective manner. They may show the best of the other-serving condition, while at the same time showing cautionary tales at their darkest.

Tolstoy is an Aesop of sorts, telling these fables to reflect personal fables. Aesop is the least common denominator for such a comparison, as Tolstoy arguably wanes Socrates in these moments. Nevertheless, he is also able to transcend these moments and remain for the 20th century onward. An author who shows beyond the shadow of a doubt the importance of the individual imperative and of doing unto others first, so that we may in the end come away from the experience of enriched individuals, carrying away the moment for the rest of our lives.

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